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ART. V. *On the Sacrifice of Human Beings as an Element of the Ancient Religion of India.* BY PROFESSOR H. H. WILSON, Director.

[Read 20th April, 1850.]

I PROPOSE to offer to the Society some illustrations of the sacrifice of human beings as an element of the ancient religion of India.

In the first book of the Rāmāyana a curious legend is narrated of the son of the Rishi Richika, named S'unahśephas, who was sold by his father for a hundred thousand cows to Ambarisha, the king of Ayodhyā, to supply the place of a sacrificial animal or victim¹ intended for a sacrifice, but stolen by Indra. S'unahśephas is accordingly conveyed to the place of sacrifice, and being dressed in red garments and decorated with garlands of red flowers, is bound to the stake. By the advice of Viśwāmitra he prays to Indra and Agni with two sacred verses (gāthās, according to Schlegel's edition; richas, in Gorresio's) communicated to him by the Rishi, and Indra bestows upon him long life, whilst at the same time the king is not disappointed of his reward. This version of the legend leaves it doubtful whether an actual sacrifice of the victim, or one only typical, is intended.

The reference made in the Rāmāyaṇa to the *sacred verses* by which S'unahśephas propitiated Indra, might lead us to expect some account of the transaction in the text of the Veda; and accordingly, in the first Ashtaka of the *Rig-veda* the sixth section contains a series of seven hymns, attributed to S'unahśephas, who addresses different divinities in succession. The object of his prayers is not, however, very decidedly pronounced, and in many respects they resemble those of any other worshipper soliciting food, wealth, cattle, and long life; and although liberation from bonds is asked for, yet the text itself intimates that these are only figurative, being the fetters of sin. Neither does it appear that any of the deities called upon rescue him from any situation of personal peril, and the recompense of his praises is the gift of a

¹ Schlegel's reading is *yajna-pas'u*, which he renders simply by *victima*. Gorresio's text is more explicit: in the first place the victim is carried off from the post whilst the king is engaged, *nara-medhena*, "intanto ch'egli offriva un sacrificio umano;" and in the next, it is said, in a rather questionable hemistich, however, that the theft was a man endowed with all lucky marks, appointed to be a victim, *naram lakshaha-sampūrṇam pasutwe niyojitam*. Schlegel's edition also has a passage to the same purport, that the stolen victim is to be recovered, or a man substituted in its place, and virtually, therefore, the two editions agree, although not exactly in words.

golden chariot by Indra, a present rather incompatible with his position as an intended victim. Hence the late Dr. Rosen was led to infer that the Vaidik hymn, except in one or two doubtful passages, bore no relation to the legend of the Rāmāyaṇa, and offered no indication of a human victim deprecating death.—“In nullo autem horum carminum (si initium hymni quatuor-vigentesimi excipias, quod sane ita intelligi potest) ne levissimum quidem indicium hominis in vitæ discrimen vocati et mortem deprecantis.”

Whatever may be the conclusions to be drawn from the legend of Śunahśepas as it appears in the Rāmāyaṇa or in the Rig-veda, there is no question of its purport as it is found in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa which is considered to be the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Rig-veda; and as the story as there told is characteristic of the style of that and similar works, the precise nature of which is yet but little known, none having been translated or printed, and as several curious circumstances are comprised in the tradition, it will not perhaps be uninteresting to have the story as it is there narrated.

Hariśchandra the son of Vedhas, was a prince of the race of Ikshvāku : he had a hundred wives, but no son. On one occasion the two sages, Nārada and Parvata were residing in his palace; and he said one day to Nārada, “Tell me, why do all creatures, whether possessed of intelligence or devoid of it, desire male progeny? What benefit is derived from a son?” Nārada thus replied: “A father who beholds the face of a living son discharges his debt [to his forefathers], and obtains immortality. Whatever benefits accrue to living beings upon earth, in fire, or in water, a father finds still more in his son. A father, by the birth of a son, traverses the great darkness [of both worlds]. He is born as it were of himself, and the son is a well freighted boat to bear him across [the ocean of misery]. What matter the impurity [of childhood], the skin [of the student], the beard [of the householder], the penance [of the hermit]. Wish, Brahmans, for a son, for he is a world without reproach. Food, vital air, vesture, dwelling, gold, beauty, cattle, wedlock, a friend, a wife, a daughter, are all contemptible: a son is the light [that elevates his father] to the highest heaven. The husband is himself conceived by his wife, who becomes as it were his mother, and by her in the tenth month he is newly born; therefore is a wife termed genitrix (jáyā), for of her is a man born again (jáyate). Gods and Rishis implant in her great lustre, and the Gods say to men, this is your parent. There is no world for one without a son. This even know the beasts of the field, and to beget offspring pair indiscriminately with their kind. [A son] is the much-commended certain path to

happiness, by which all [rational] beings having male progeny travel; and birds and beasts are conscious of the same."

Having repeated verses to this effect, Nárada advised Hariśchandra to pray to Varuṇa for a son, promising to present him as an offering to that divinity. "So be it," said the prince; and repairing to Varuṇa he said: "Let a son be born unto me, and with him, I will sacrifice to you."—"So be it," said Varuṇa, and a son was born to the king, who was named Rohita. "A son has been born to you," said Varuṇa, "sacrifice with him to me."—"An animal," replied the king, "is fit for sacrifice only after ten days from birth. When the term of purification shall have passed, I will sacrifice to you."—"Very well," said Varuṇa. The ten days expired, and Varuṇa said, "Now sacrifice with him to me." The king replied, "An animal is fit for sacrifice only when the teeth are cut; let the teeth come through, and then I will sacrifice to you." Varuṇa consented: the teeth were cut: "and now," said Varuṇa, "sacrifice with him to me."—"No," replied the king, "an animal is fit for sacrifice only when the first teeth are shed: let the teeth be shed, and then I will sacrifice to you."—"So be it," said Varuṇa.

Well, the teeth were shed; "And now," said Varuṇa, "sacrifice with him to me."—"No," objected the king; "an animal is fit for sacrifice only when his [second] set of teeth are through; wait till then, and I will perform the sacrifice." Varuṇa assented. The second teeth were cut. "Now," said Varuṇa, "his teeth are produced; sacrifice with him to me."—"No," replied the king, "for a kshatriya is not fit for sacrifice until he has been invested with arms: let him receive his martial investiture, then I will sacrifice to you."—"So be it," said Varuṇa. The youth grew, and was invested with arms; and Varuṇa said, "now sacrifice to me with him." The king replied, "Be it so." But he called his son, and said, "My child, Varuṇa gave you to me, and I have also promised to sacrifice with you to him."—"By no means," said the youth; and taking his bow, he set off to the forest, where he wandered for a twelvemonth.

Upon Rohita's disappearance Varuṇa afflicted the descendant of Ikshwáku with dropsy; which when Rohita heard he set off to return home. On the way he was met by Indra in the shape of a Brahman, who said to him, "We have heard, Rohita, that prosperity attends him who undergoes great labour, and that a man, although excellent, is held in disesteem if he tarries amongst his kin. Indra is the friend of the wanderer, therefore do thou wander on—wander on." Thus spake the Brahman; and Rohita passed a second year in the woods.

At the end of that period he turned towards home, but Indra, as a

mortal, again met him, and said, "The feet of the traveller bear flowers, his body grows and puts forth fruit. All his sins are effaced by the fatigue he incurs in travelling a good road and they fall asleep. Wander on, therefore—wander on." So said the Brahman; and Rohita spent another year in the woods.¹

At the end of the third year the prince resumed his journey homewards. He was met as before by Indra in a human form, who said to him, "The prosperity of a man who sits down inactive, sits also still. It rises up when he rises, it slumbers when he sleeps, and moves when he moves. Wander on, therefore—persist—wander on;" and Rohita remained a fourth year in the forests.

At the end of the fourth year, Rohita was again stopped by Indra, who said, "The sleeper is the Kali age; the awaker is the Dwápara; the riser is the Treta, but the mover is the Krita age. Wander on, therefore—wander on;" and Rohita tarried a fifth year in the woods.

At the close of the fifth year he was returning home, but as before Indra encountered him, and said, "The wanderer finds honey—the wanderer finds the sweet fig tree. Behold the glory of the Sun, who, ever-moving, never reposes. Wander on, therefore—wander on." So Rohita returned for the sixth year to the forests.

Whilst wandering thus in the woods he encountered the Rishi Ajigartta, the son of Suyavasa, who was distressed through want of food. He had three sons, S'unahpuecha, S'unahséphas, and S'unalángula. Rohita said to him, "Rishi, I will give thee a hundred cows for one of these thy sons, that by him I may redeem myself." But the Rishi, taking hold of the eldest, said, "Not this one;" "No, nor this one," said the mother, securing the youngest; but they both agreed to sell the middle son S'unahséphas, and Rohita having paid the hundred cows, took the youth and departed from the woods. He proceeded to his father and said, "Rejoice, father, for with this youth shall I redeem myself." So Hariśchandra had recourse to the royal Varuṇa, and said, "With this youth will I sacrifice to you." And Varuṇa replied, "Be it so—a Brahman is better than a Kshatriya;" and thence directed the king to perform the sacrificial ceremony termed the Rájasúya; and he, on the day of initiation, appointed S'unahséphas to be the human victim.

At that sacrifice of Hariśchandra, Viswámitra was the Hotri or reciter of the Rich; Jamadagni, the Adhwaryu, or repeater of the Yajush; Vasiṣṭha, the Brahmá or superintending priest, and Yásya the Udgátri, or chaunter of the Sáma; but they had no one who was com-

¹ Prapathi. The commentary says, "in going to tirthas," &c.

petent to perform the office of binding the victim, when consecrated, to the stake, whereupon Ajigartta said, "If you give me another hundred cows I will perform the duty;" and they gave him the cows, and he bound the victim. But for the victim thus consecrated and bound, sanctified by the divinities of sacrifice, and thrice circumambulated by the priests bearing burning brands of sacred grass, no immolator could be found [amongst the ministrant Brahmans], when Ajigartta again offered himself, saying, "Give me another hundred cows and I will immolate him;" accordingly they gave him the cows, and he went forth to sharpen his knife.¹ In this interval S'unahséphas reflected, "These [people] will put me to death as if I were not a man² but an animal; my only hope is the aid of some of the gods, to whom I will have recourse." So thinking, he prayed to Prajapati, the first of the gods, with the prayer 'Kasya núnam,' &c.; but Prajapati said, "Agni is the nearest of the gods, appeal to him." He did so, saying, 'Aguer vayam:' on which Agni said to him, "Savitri is the lord of all the protecting powers, pray to him;" so S'unahséphas repeated 'Abhi twá deva.' Savitri said, "You are dedicated to the royal Varuṇa, appeal to him," which S'unahséphas did in the thirty-one following stanzas, beginning 'Na hi te kshatram.' Varuṇa said "Agni is the mouth of the gods, and most friendly [to man], praise him, and we will set you free," which S'unahséphas did in twenty-two stanzas,³ beginning 'Vasishtháhi.' Agni said, "Praise the Viśwadevas, and then we will liberate you;" so S'unahséphas praised them, saying, 'Namo mahadbhyaḥ,' &c.; but the Viśwadevas said, "Indra is the mightiest of the gods, the most excellent, and the most able to lead men to happiness; worship him, and we will loose you;" so S'unahséphas praised Indra with the hymn beginning 'Yach-chidhi satya somapá;' and Indra, being pleased by his prayer, gave him a golden chariot.⁴ He nevertheless recommended him to propitiate the Aświns; he did so, and they desired him to praise Ushas, or the personified dawn, which he did in three concluding stanzas, on repeating which his bonds fell off, and he was set free; and the king, the father of Rohita, was cured of his complaint.

Then the priests said to him, "Perform the completion of this our rite to-day;" on which he showed to them the [mode of] offering the libation of the Soma juice, accompanying it by four stanzas, beginning

¹ Or sword, "*asim nis'ánáryáya.*"

² Or, "as if I were not a man;" for according to the Veda, in the case of a man, after circumambulating, they let him go, and substitute a goat.

³ We have twenty-three in the text; the last is to be omitted, as not addressed to Agni.

⁴ It is said, "in his mind;" perhaps meaning that he purposed to give it to him.

'Yach-chidhi;' then having brought the pitcher (*drona kalasa*.) he directed the remainder to be poured into it, with the stanza 'Uchchistham chambor,' and then with the *swáhá*, preceded by four stanzas, made the oblation, concluding with an offering to fire.¹

When the rite was completed, *S'unahséphas* placed himself by the side of *Viśwámitra*, to whom *Ajigartta* the son of *Suyavasa* said, "Give me my son;" but *Viśwámitra* answered, "No, the gods have given him to me." Hence he was called *Devaráta*? (the God-given,) the son of *Viśwámitra*, from whom descended the *Kápileyas* and *Bábhravas*. *Ajigartta* then appealed to *S'unahséphas*, and said, "My son, your mother and I intreat your return;" and finding him silent, continued, "you are by birth the son of *Ajigartta* of the race of the *Angirases*, learned and renowned; do not separate from your great grandsire's descendants, but come back to me." To which *S'unahséphas* answered, "All present saw you with the implement of immolation in your hand:³ such a sight was never beheld even amongst *S'údras*. Descendant of *Angiras*, you have preferred three hundred cows to me." Then said *Ajigartta*, "My child, the wicked act that I have committed afflicts me sorely. I repent me of it. Let the three hundred cows be thine." *S'unahséphas* answered, "He who has once done a wicked deed will be liable to repeat it. Thou canst never be free from the disposition of the vile [*S'údras*]. Thou hast done what is unpardonable."—"Unpardonable!" repeated *Viśwámitra*, and said, "Dreadful appeared the son of *Suyavasa*, armed with a weapon, intending to slay. Let not his son be his, but become a son of mine." But then said *S'unahséphas* to *Viśwámitra*, "Son of a king, explain to me how this may be, that I, of the race of *Angiras*, can be in the relation of a son to thee?" *Viśwámitra* answered, "Thou shalt be the eldest of my own, and an excellent progeny shall be thine. Thou comest to me as the gift of the gods, and therefore I welcome thee."—"But," said *S'unahséphas*, "who will assure me, best of the *Bháratas*, of the concurrence of these [thy sons] for my affiliation and seniority if I become thy son?" Thereupon *Viśwámitra* called his sons together and said, "*Madhuchhandas*, *Rishabha*, *Renu*, *Ashtaka*, and all the rest of the brethren, listen to my commands, and dispute not the seniority of *S'unahséphas*." Now *Viśwámitra* had a hundred and one sons, fifty of whom were senior and fifty junior to *Madhuchhandas*. The seniors did not

¹ This is obscure, being little else than the text; but it relates to a particular ceremony called the "*Anjas Sava*," (*Sava Abhisava rijju-márgena*.) "the right-way oblation."

² *Theodotus*, *Deodatus*.

³ *S'ása-hastam sarve api adris'uh*. *S'ása* is explained {by *vis'asana-hetuh*, the cause or implement of immolating, or *khadga*, a sword. }

approve of the adoption, and Viśwámitra cursed them and said, "Your progeny shall be degraded;" and consequently their descendants were the Andhras, Pándras, Sabaras, Pulindas, and Mútivas. Thus there are numerous degraded races sprung from Viśwámitra, forming the greater portion of the barbarous tribes [Dasyus]. On the other hand, Madhuchhandas and the fifty who were his juniors said, "We accede to whatever our father considers right. We all give thee, Śunahséphas, precedence, and acknowledge ourselves to be subordinate to thee." Viśwámitra, therefore, much pleased with them, said, "Your sons shall be affluent in cattle and possessed of offspring."

The latter circumstances told by the *Āitareya Bráhmaṇa* of the descent of barbarous tribes from the sons of Viśwámitra, although suggestive of inquiry, are foreign to our present purpose, and need not be further noticed. The main purport of the quotation, the actual sacrifice of a human victim, is fully established, at least at the period of the compilation of the *Bráhmaṇa*: how far that expresses the practice of the Veda period may admit of question.

It is the received opinion of Hindu writers that the *Bráhmaṇas* are an integral part of the Veda. Thus Sáyana, the great scholiast on the Vedas, in the introductory discussion on these writings prefixed to his explanation of the text of the Rich, observes upon the authority of Apastamba, "Veda is the denomination of the Mantras and the *Bráhmaṇas*." By the Mantras are meant the hymns and prayers; and the *Bráhmaṇas*, say the *Mímánsakas*, are intended to elucidate and, as it were, individualize the objects which are only generally adverted to in the hymns, as where it is said in the *S'úkta*, or hymn, "give abundantly," the *Bráhmaṇa* explains it, "give or offer clarified butter in abundance." The same authorities declare that the Veda consists of two parts, Mantra and *Bráhmaṇa*; and that the only unexceptionable definition which can be given of the latter is, that all that portion of the Veda which is not Mantra is *Bráhmaṇa*. In exact conformity to these original authorities is the following statement of Mr. Colebrooke. "Each Veda consists of two parts, denominated the Mantras and the *Bráhmaṇas*, or prayers and precepts. The complete collection of the hymns, prayers, and invocations belonging to one Veda is entitled its *Sanhitá*. Every other portion of Indian Scripture is included under the general head of divinity—*Bráhmaṇa*. This comprises precepts which inculcate religious duties, maxims which explain those precepts, and arguments which relate to theology." To these may be added narratives which illustrate precepts and practices, or explain incidents connected with the origin or objects

of the Mantras, such as that of Śunahśepas, which has been cited.

Notwithstanding the concurrence of these authorities and the generally prevalent opinion of the Hindus, it requires but a cursory inspection of such a work as the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa to deny the accuracy of the attribution. This Brāhmaṇa is not an integral part of the Rig-veda, and never could have been so. It is a work of a totally different era, and a totally different system, and if, as is likely it may be, it is to be received as a type of other similar compilations, conforming as it does accurately enough to the general description, we shall be authorized to draw the same inference with respect to all, and to separate the Brāhmaṇas from the Hindu religion as it appears in the Saṁhitās, or collections of the prayers and hymns.

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, as will have been observed in the translation of the legend of Śunahśepas, refers to the hymns or Śuktas of the Saṁhitā, specifying the number of verses in which he was fabled to have addressed the gods, agreeably to their order and place in the Saṁhitā. Again, in stating that he taught to the priests the manner of offering libations, it quotes the leading phrases of different Śuktas which are to be found in different and distant portions of the Saṁhitā. This, it may be observed, is in strict agreement with the general arrangement of the Brāhmaṇas: directions are given for the performance of various religious rites, and the hymns, or portions of the hymns which are to be repeated on such occasions, are quoted in the same manner, merely by a few initial phrases, and taken from separate and unconnected parts of the Saṁhitā, very commonly having little relation to the actual ceremony.

Now the fact, and still more, the manner of quoting the texts of the Saṁhitā, necessarily lead to the conclusion, that the Saṁhitā must have existed in its present form before the compilation of the Brāhmaṇa was undertaken, and as it must have been widely current and familiarly known, or the citation of broken and isolated texts could neither have been adopted nor verifiable, it must have assumed its actual arrangement long anterior to the compilation of the Brāhmaṇas. But the Saṁhitā itself is of a date long subsequent to its component parts. There is no doubt of the accuracy of the tradition that the hymns of the Vedas had long been current as single and unconnected compositions, preserved in families or schools by oral communication, probably for centuries; and that they were finally collected and arranged as we now have them, by a school or schools of learned Brahmans, of which Vyāsa, (possibly an abstraction, as it means merely an arranger,) was the nominal head. Allowing, therefore, a considerable period before

the *Sanhitās* were collected into form, and another interval before they could be familiarly referred to, it follows that the *Brāhmaṇas* cannot be an integral part of the Veda, understanding thereby the expression of the primitive notions of the Hindus, and that they are not entitled to be classed as authorities for the oldest and most genuine system of Hindu worship.

In fact, in the *Brāhmaṇas* we find fully developed the whole Brahmanical system, of much of which we have but faint and questionable indications in the *Mantras*. We have the whole body of both religious and social institutions—a variety of practices alluded to of a more complicated texture than the apparently simple ritual of the *Sanhitā*; and the complete recognition both in name and practice of the different castes, the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the *Sūdra*: we have also the Brahmins distinguished as differing among themselves in tribe and dignity, and sometimes engaged in disputes for precedence and the exclusive performance of particular rites, all which it may be observed is incontrovertible proof that a very long interval had elapsed between the composition of the *Sūktas* and the *Brāhmaṇas*—between the first dawn and the noon-day culmination of the Brahmanical system.

Having come to the conclusion then that the *Brāhmaṇas* are not an integral part of the primitive Veda or Hindu system, but admitting that they may be considered as an essential part of the Veda of the Brahmins, or as a scriptural authority for the Brahmanical forms of worship, and for their social institutions when fully developed, we have next to consider the period to which they may belong, and how far they may be regarded as authentic representations of an ancient (though not the most ancient) religious and social system in India. This, as usual with all Hindu chronology, is a difficult question: certainty is unattainable, but we may come to probable conclusions within reasonable limits from internal evidence. The *Brāhmaṇas* are posterior to the discontinuance of exclusively oral teaching; they could not cite miscellaneous and unconnected texts to the extent to which they cite them, unless those texts had been accessible in a written shape. They are subsequent therefore to the use of writing, to which the hymns or *Mantras* were in great part, if not wholly, anterior. They are prior in all probability to the heroic poems, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, as we have no allusions to the demigods and heroes whom they celebrate: no allusion to *Krishṇa* and *Rāma*, although the latter name occurs as that of a Brahman, the son or a descendant of *Bhrigu*, which has nothing to do with *Rāma*, the son of king *Dāśaratha*, any more than the name of *Krishṇa*, which occurs in the *Sanhitā* as the name of an Asura, implies any allusion to the *Krishṇa* of the *Mahābhārata*. There is no

reference to any controversial opposition to the doctrines, or rites of Brahmanical Hinduism, although differences of opinion as to the purport of the performance of some ceremonies are adverted to, and so far therefore, we have no reference to Buddhism. Again, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is prior to the *Sātras*, or rules for conducting religious rites, ascribed to *Aśwalāyana*, *Baudhāyana*, and others who are undoubtedly authors of a remote period. It is, perhaps, not far from the period of the oldest passages in the laws of *Manu*, in some of which we find allusions to the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇa*, as in the case of *Śunahsephas*, and also of a prince named *Pañjavana*, who is not named in later works. In the etymology also of the term *jāyá*, a wife, as one in whom a man is born again in the person of a son, we have the very same words.¹ The *Brāhmaṇa* may be the earlier of the two, but not by any very great interval. Finally, the style although more modern than that of the *Veda*, is ancient and obscure, and contains many words and phrases of Vaidik antiquity. Upon the whole, as a mere matter of conjecture, subject to reconsideration, I should be disposed to place the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* about six or seven centuries before the Christian era.

So far, therefore, it may be received as authority to a qualified extent for the primitive practices of the Hindus, and for including amongst them the sacrifice, on particular occasions, of human victims. Not that the practice ever prevailed to the extent to which it spread through most of the ancient nations, or partook in general of the same character. These, it has been asserted, were entirely of an expiatory nature, performed under an impression of fear, and intended to deprecate the anger of the Gods. Such were the sacrifices of the Druids, the Scythians, and the Phœnicians; and such were the Thargelia of the Athenians, when a man and woman were annually put to death in order to expiate the sins of the public, and redeem them from any national calamity. They were not, however, restricted to this source, but were not unfrequently vindictive, as when prisoners taken in war were sacrificed, like the three hundred citizens of Perusia whom Augustus offered in one day to his deified uncle (Divo Julio); or as the Grecian navigators whom the barbarians of Tauris sacrificed to Artemis whenever cast upon their shores. They had their origin also in notions of divination, as was the case in the worship of Mithra, when auguries were taken from the entrails of human victims; and they seem in some instances to have been suggested by a purely sanguinary spirit, as was the case with the perpetually recurring sacrifices to Baal and Moloch in the Phœnician Colonies, and especially in Carthage.² No intimation of any such

¹ *Manu*, b. ix. v. 8.

² See Bryant's Chapter on Anthropothusia and Teknothusia, vol. vi. p. 294.

purposes are traceable in the indistinct allusions to human sacrifices in the Veda. Their object seems to have been the propitiation of some divinity, by devoting to him that which was most precious to the sacrificer. This feeling seems also to have been very widely diffused throughout the East in the most ancient times, as was the practice of the individual of pledging himself to the act by a solemn promise or vow. We might infer that the practice was not unknown to the patriarchal era, from the conduct of Abraham when commanded to offer up his son; for although he would not under any circumstances have hesitated to obey the divine command, yet he might, consistently with his obedience, have expressed some surprise at the injunction, had the purport of it been wholly unfamiliar. At a later date in the Jewish history we have a similar sort of sacrifice under a solemn previous engagement in the vow of Jephtha; and it is worthy of remark that one of the causes assigned by the Greek writers to the detention of the fleet at Aulis, and consequent sacrifice of Iphigenia, was Agamemnon's violation of the vow which he had made to offer to Diana the most lovely thing which the year in which his daughter was born should produce: Iphigenia was that thing, and the sacrifice was insisted on in satisfaction of the vow. The offering of children to Moloch, subsequently borrowed by the Jews from their idolatrous neighbours, originated probably in a similar feeling, which it is evident exercised a very extensive influence over the nations of Western Asia in remote antiquity, and, as appears from the story of S'unahséphas, was not confined to that quarter, but had reached the opposite limits of Asia at a period at least prior by ten or twelve centuries to the Christian era.

Further, we find a like community of ideas in the institution of vicarious sacrifices. In the story of S'unahséphas, one human victim is substituted for another, whilst in the parallel cases of antiquity the substitutes were animals. It is not unlikely that this was also a primitive notion of the Hindus, and at any rate it had become so by the time of the Bráhmaṇas; for S'unahséphas is made to say, "They will put me to death as if I were not a man"—that is, according to Sáyana's commentary, founded upon a text of the Veda which he cites, but which is not easily verified, when the assistants had circumambulated the person bound to the stake, they set him free without any detriment, and substituted an animal (a goat) in his place. Hence Mr. Colebrooke concluded that the Purusha-medha, or sacrifice of a man, was never anything but typical; and the ceremony as enjoined in the Śatapatha Bráhmaṇa of the Yajush, on which his opinion was founded, is evidently of that character. In this, one hundred and eighty-five men of various specified tribes, characters, and professions, are bound

to eleven *yúpas*, or posts, and after recitation of a hymn celebrating the allegorical immolation of *Náráyana*, they are liberated unhurt, and oblations of butter are offered on the sacrificial fire. Hence Mr. Colebrooke concludes that human sacrifices were not authorized by the *Veda* itself, but were either then abrogated and an emblematical ceremony substituted in their place, or they were introduced in later times by the authors of such works as the *Kálíka Puráña*, for instance, in which minute directions are given for the offering of a human victim to *Káli*, whom it is said his blood satisfies for a thousand years.

That human offerings to the dark forms of *S'iva* and *Durgá* were sometimes perpetrated in later times, we know from various original sources, particularly from that very effective scene in the drama of *Mádhava* and *Málatí*, in which *Aghoraghanta* is represented as about to sacrifice *Málatí* to *Chámundá*, when she is rescued by her lover. No such divinities, however, neither *S'iva* nor *Durgá*, much less any of their terrific forms, are even named, so far as we know, in the *Vedas*, and therefore these works could not be authority for their sanguinary worship. That the practice is enjoined on particular occasions by the *Tantras* and some of the *Puráñas* connected with this branch of the Hindu faith, is, no doubt, true; but these are works of a much later date, within the limits mostly of the Mohammedan government within the period of which the works were compiled, and under which their injunctions could not safely have been carried into operation; and they never amounted perhaps to more than the expression of the feeling inspired by the character of the divinities worshipped, although they may have been occasionally attempted to be realized by some fierce and fanatical enthusiasts. These practices, therefore, are of a very different character from those which there is reason to believe might have actually taken place, though rarely and under special circumstances, under the authority of the *Veda*, and which originated in a common feeling and faith diffused throughout the most civilized nations of the world—the nations of the East—in the remotest periods of antiquity.